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ABSTRACT

The Christian Brother organization, faced with a decreasing number of workers and forced to reassess the allocation of its resources, conducted a survey of its members. The survey solicited the brothers' views of the organization's direction and sought to discern whether the brothers' beliefs and actions were in agreement. The survey, with 93 items and 15 categories, was given to 163 members, of whom 89 percent responded. There were two limits to the survey. First, the results could not be generalized to other regions. Second, the results could not be applied to other religious orders. However, the survey provided a wealth of useful information. In the first phase, the questionnaire revealed that more than half of the brothers strongly supported religious activities; half felt that nontraditional communities should exist in the district; the brothers disagreed on the number of brothers needed; most of the members accepted the increasing role of the lay-colleague; and, finally, most of the brothers were satisfied with their work. The second and third phases, in which the group was subdivided and compared, generally showed few discrepancies in the results. Included are four tables, a list of references, and a complete copy of the survey. (RG)

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Abstract

Since all religious orders specializing in educational apostolates are facing a shrinking workforce, each of these organizations must be concerned with the allocation of resources, specifically the assignment of personnel and the possible closing of schools. Historically, these decisions were made at the administrative level without input from the general membership. But, this process fails to solicit a consensus which may result in job dissatisfaction. The impact of these decisions may also influence potential applicants. Thus, the authors decided to gather data from all members using survey research methods.

While some believe that surveys are limited to the descriptive format, the authors feel that a survey can provide both descriptive as well as relational data. This survey employed a questionnaire developed by the authors. This survey provided the organization with a description of the perceptions of its members as related to the direction and scope of the organization and also described the degree of congruency between the professed beliefs of the organization and the action of its members.

The survey yielded extremely useful information. For example, the findings showed that while conservative attitudes were expected among the older members, this was not true. The data showed that conservative attitudes were dispersed among young and old, i.e., half of the members across age groups had conservative attitudes. Additionally, the authors were able to detect worksites which were wholly undesirable to all groups as well as worksites which were viewed with mixed perceptions.

Introduction

Historically, religious organizations have employed autocratic models of decision making. High level administrators such as bishops, pastors, and provincials, were viewed as having ultimate authority residing in the position. Organizational needs took presidence over individual needs and this operative model was generally accepted by the members without question. However, the counter-cultural movements of the 1960's impacted the way individuals perceived their role in these organizations. A concern for self was brought to the foreground of attention. Individuals began to realize that not all of their needs could or should be met within the religious organization. This challenge to the traditional organizational structure resulted in confusion and disunity. The inevitable consequence of this disparity between organizational and individual needs was a conflict leading to a major exodus of religious.

In the last twenty years the leaders of religious organizations have come to accept more and more the operative principles of the behavioral sciences. Utilizing these principles, administrators and subordinates have become aware of the fact that individual need and organizational need are not mutally exclusive. The evidence of this understanding is the evolution of the decision making process from autocratic to a more democratic approach.

One organization in the process of grappling with this transition is the religious order, Christian Brothers New Orleans/Santa Fe District. In response to a Christian Brother District Chapter mandate, the provincial and district leaders were given the task of making major educational and apostolatic changes. The approach used to accomplish this task was unique in that input was solicted from all members prior to the drafting of any proposal for reorganization. This paper describes the procedure used by the Christian Brother organization.

Statement of the Problem

The Christian Brother organization is the largest order of teaching brothers in the Catholic Church. The Christian Brother New Orleans/Santa Fe District covers a four state area and provides staff for junior high, secondary, and collegiate institutions. The Christian Brother organization is currently facing a shrinking workforce which is forcing the organization to rethink its current allocation of

resources including the reassignment of staff and the possible closing of schools. Since the district membership is limited to 163 men, any major reorganization will directly impact all of the members.

Research indicates that individuals handle change better when they are part of the process yielding the change. For this reason, those charged with the responsibility for gathering data decided to use survey research methods which is an efficient and effective way of soliciting input from all the membership. Additionally, survey research can provide both descriptive as well as relational data. These data will be used by the elected members of the forthcoming district chapter to implement the mandate, Proposition 15.

Definition of Terms

District: The smallest administrative unit of a religious organization.

District Chapter: The policy-making authority which meets every three years to establish the long-range goals for the district.

District Council: The legislative policy-making authority within a district which meets quarterly to deal with administrative matters.

Provincial: Title given to the highest administrative officier within in a district.

Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited by the following factors:

1. The survey population is limited to Christian Brothers New Orleans/Santa Fe District, thus, the results may not generalize to other geographic areas.
2. The Christian Brother organization specializes in secondary education and is unique in that it is both an educational and religious organization. Survey results may not generalize to other religious orders.

Methodology

The instrument used was a survey developed by the researchers with input from committee members and the district council. The purpose of the study was to provide the Christian Brother organization with a description of the perceptions of its members as related to the direction and scope of the organization and also to describe the degree of congruency between the professed beliefs of the organization and the action of its members.

The survey was designed to gather data that described the perceptions of the district as a whole and could also be used to analyze sub-groups. These sub-group analyses would addresse three questions: do the informal perceptions of the brothers match those given in a research instrument, are the perceptions of the older members different than those of the younger brothers, and does the clustering of communities into two regions create dichotomous perceptions?

The survey instrument contains 93 items and addresses 15 categories. The categories included: age range, apostolic work, degrees earned, official institute special enrichment programs, weighted external indicators of the religious life, weighted external indicators of the individual brother's religious life, community and formation questions, perceptions about the diminishing number of brothers, perceptions of the impact of the number of brothers per school site, attractiveness of each school to the individual brother, the perceptions of lay colleagues by brothers, information regarding job satisfaction, the retirement issue, and priorities for incoming provincial.

Procedure

The survey was administered to 163 Chrisitian Brothers within the New Orleans/Santa Fe district. The survey consisted of a cover letter and a response sheet. The cover letter contained a brief rationale of the survey design and directions for completing the survey. Group mean scores for each category were calculated. Group mean scores were also calculated by age and region.

Analysis of Data

89% of the brothers responded to the survey. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by job assignment.

Table 1

Distribution by Job Assignment

Assignment	Number	(%)
Principals	11	(7)
Asst. Adm.	8	(5)
Teachers	57	(38)
Ancillary	29	(20)
Service	12	(8)
Sabbatical	3	(2)
Retired	16	(11)
Apostolate	14	(9)

Table 2 presents distribution of highest degrees earned.

Table 2

Degrees	Number	(%)
B.A.	24	(17)
B.S.	5	(3)
M.A.	59	(41)
M.A.+30	37	(25)
Doctorate	11	(8)

*6% of respondents miscoded or did not answer this question.

The first phase of the analysis examined the data from two perspectives: responses by individual categories yielding group means and responses by the larger categories of religious convictions/actions and education philosophy/application. Some of the individual categories described the respondents' religious beliefs and the actions which best reflected these beliefs. As the Christian Brother organization is both a religious order and an educational institution, religious convictions strongly influence their educational philosophy. These religious beliefs were considered in the analysis of the educational categories.

The categories focusing on an individual's religious convictions were items 11-26, weighted external indicators of the religious life, and items 27-37, weighted external indicators of the individual brother's religious life. As the administrators believed that the religious convictions of the membership directly impacted the educational philosophy of the organization as reflected in their apostolates, these data were analyzed and presented as such.

In items 11-26, with the exception of three items, 14,19, and 20, more than 50% of the respondents strongly believe in the activities commonly associated with the religious life. In items 27-37, the data regarding the external indicators of the individual brother's life were consistent with items 11-26. This analysis indicates that there is a shared acceptance of these activities.

The next categories also focused on the structure of the order, specifically the concept of community living, items 39-41, the philosophy of the training program for aspirants, items 42 and 43, and the concerns about the decline in membership, items 44-48. The only disparate data shown in these items are differing viewpoints about the acceptance of a non-traditional community life. 50% of the respondents feel that there should be non-traditional communities within the district. Within this number are the responses from 14 brothers currently living in non-traditional communities.

The data from items 44-51 show that the majority of brothers (82%) feel that the presence of brothers at the school site affects the quality of education. However, there is conflicting data as to the number of brothers needed to affect this impact. 46% of the respondents feel that the number of brothers, rather than the quality of brother, is the more important factor. This is significant considering the diminishing number of brothers and the need to restructure the type and number of apostolates as evidenced in the district's chapter mandate. Item 75 further demonstrates the importance of these concerns in that 88% of the respondents feel that the primary focus of the Christian Brother organization should be the school.

The next set of items, 53-69, dealt with the attractiveness of each school to the individual brother and the brother's perception of his present assignment. The data revealed that a number of schools were perceived as less attractive work sites. This perceived undesirability was evident across the group regardless of assignment. The perceptions of those currently assigned to these "undesirable work locations" were consistent with the rest of the group.

The concept of lay-colleagues as on-site school personnel was examined in items 70-73. The data show that most respondents

understand the increasing role of the lay-colleague in the Christian Brother schools and accept this role.

The remaining items, 76-85, focused on job satisfaction, opportunity for job change, and retirement. The responses showed that only 6% of the respondents were dissatisfied with their jobs and considered changing jobs. Data from those in non-traditional school settings are consistent with data from those in traditional settings. The majority of the retirees felt satisfied in their current work.

The second phase of analysis involved the comparison of data based on the responses of two groups: respondents living in the western region (New Mexico, Colorado, and the city of El Paso) and the southern region (Louisiana and the city of Houston,Texas). As stated previously, the Christian Brother administrators believed that there would be a variance in responses between the two groups. A third group was created to obtain data from those brothers on special assignment, i.e., not part of either region.

Table 3
Membership by Regions

Region	No. of Brothers
Western	53
Southern	101
Special Assign.	9

An analysis of the items dealing with religious activities showed that there is little variance between regions and between either region and the general survey totals.

In items 38 the individual variances parallel mean scores. Considering the variety of community structures within the district, the term "uniform community living" must be clearly defined prior to interpretation.

In items 38-52 the data show no significant variance between means. However, where there was variance, the higher percentages were from those in the southern region.

In items 53-65 the responses regarding desirability of school assignments were consistent with general survey data. This analysis did not assume a reason for the responses. Interpretation was limited to raw data and crosstabulations.

Group means for all remaining items were consistent with each

other and with the general survey means.

The third phase of analysis focused on the comparison of responses by age groups. The younger age group consisted of those brothers 55 years or younger. The mature group referred to those brothers over the age of 55.

Table 4
Age Groups

Age	No. of Brothers
55 or younger	71
56+	92

The analysis showed no significant variance in the mean scores for items 11-37, with the exception of item 18. In this item 82% of the younger group indicated that community meetings were an essential part of their religious life in contrast to the 56% of the mature group.

In items 38-48 and 40-48 there is no significant difference in means.

In item 39 there was a significant number of younger brothers who responded "no", the Christian Brothers' impact on education is directly related to the number of brothers in a school. An equally significant number of mature brothers responded "yes" to this question. These data should be used when considering reduction of services or assignment of staff. This is consistent with responses to item 49. Item 50 is best analyzed in reference to these items in that both groups consider the quality of the brother more important than the quantity. However, there is no indication as to the number of brothers needed to achieve an impact.

In items 51 and 52 there was no difference in means between groups or between groups and general survey totals.

In items 53-65 the responses showed that four schools were perceived as undesirable assignments by both the younger and mature group. More of the younger brothers felt that an assignment to these schools would be "accepted with difficulty".

In items 66-85 there was no significant variance of means.

Summary of Results

The purpose of the survey was to provide descriptive data regarding the perceptions of the membership in two areas: the professed beliefs of the members and the degree to which these beliefs and the members' actions were congruent. The survey design yielded data in 15 areas. These data were analyzed by group mean for each individual category, by comparison of means between the two subgroups and by a comparison of sub-group means with group means. It was determined that the preconceived belief of philosophical differences between age groups and regions did not exist. Conservative attitudes were dispered among young and old, i.e., half of the members across age groups had conservative attitudes. It was also determined that there was consistency in the responses describing the external indicators of the relgious life and the external indicators of an individual brother's life. There were only two areas of disparity: the perception as to the number of brothers needed at a school site in order to make an impact and the perception of the desirability of individual school sites. Certain worksites were described as wholly undesirable to all groups and a significant number of other sites were viewed with mixed perceptions.

Interpretation of Results

A comparison of the mean scores for the items focusing on external indicators of the religious life shows minor variances. However, the item addressing "uniform community living" yielded interesting results in that a significant number of younger brothers answered "no" while an equal number of older brothers answered "yes". It should be noted that embedded in the "no" responses are the fourteen brothers who are currently living in non-traditional communities. This disparity did not exist across regions.

While there was no significant differences in the mean scores for item 41, it should be noted that 14 respondents, 7 older brothers and 7 younger brothers, indicated that they were not content in their present community. The questions does not provide for interpretation in that there is no way of knowing the cause for this discontentment.

There is an even split among respondents in item 45. 53% of the brothers said that fewer men are attracted to the brother's life because of the way that life is currently lived in the district. 41% answered "no". This split is also evident across age groups. To interpret these data correctly it will be necessary to clarify the respondents' interpretation of the phrase "how life is currently lived in the district".

There was a 46%/50% split in the district regarding those who do and those who do not believe the importance of Christian Brother impact on education is directly related to the number of brothers in a school(item 49). This split also occured in the comparison of means by age groups. 75% of the younger group responded "no", while 60% of the older members felt that impact was directly related to numbers. These data were consistent with items 52 and 75, both of which refer to staffing. There was a 53/41% split among respondents whether the organization should actively support brothers who prefer a non-school apostolate(item 52). In item 75, 88% of all respondents within the group and across groups said that the primary focus of the organization should be the school. These data should be used when considering reduction of services, i.e., school closures and when assigning staff.

Item 50 which asked whether the impact of the brothers in a school is related to quality, was best analyzed in relation to item 49. Both young and old group considered quality more important than numbers. However, among the older members, the responses seemed to indicate that a minimum number of brothers were needed to make an impact. In both cases the focus was on quality.

Although 89% of the respondents said they were content in their present assignment, the degree of contentment was not discernable. There was no way of telling whether contentment indicated a desire to stay where they were and/or a general reluctance to relocate. The data from items 53-65 identified 3 schools which were clearly undesirable. More than 50% of all brothers, including both age groups, both regions, and those brothers assigned to these schools, said that they would accept an assignment to these three schools "with difficulty". These data do not lend themselves to interpretation as to the reason for their perceived "undesirability". In one case 0% of the respondents from the western region would accept a particular assignment with "enthusiasm". There were several cases where brothers in the western region were more reluctant to accept schools in the southern region. However, the perceptions of both groups were generally consistent. These data do not lend themselves to interpretations; therefore, there was no way of telling the reason for the perceived undesirability.

Items 66-69 were deleted as the wording was confusing. These concerns will be addressed at a later date.

There was no significant variance in the responses given to items 70-73. All groups said they accepted the role of the lay-colleague in the schools. It should be noted that 100% of the younger group responded favorably to the increasing role of the lay-colleague. Item 71 reinforced this

perception in that the younger group appears to be more open to working with the lay-colleagues in roles other than non-administrative.

The data from items 77-79 supported a general feeling of contentment in respondents' present assignment/apostolate.

Items 80 and 81 focused on the brothers' perceptions of retirement. These questions were answered by all brothers, retired and non-retirees. Most brothers felt that retirement should be voluntary, i.e., not mandated by age, unless there is a school policy.

Items 82-85 were questions for retired brothers only; therefore, the data were descriptive and no comparisons were made. 100% of the respondents in the western group indicated that they did not want help in choosing an alternate apostolate. Only 24% of this same group said they had help in preparing for retirement.

Because of miscoding, specifically the coding of more than one response, the possible misinterpretation of the wording, and because these items were designed as a set, these data were considered invalid. These items will be addressed at a later date.

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Survey Number 1
New Orleans-Santa Fe District
Step 3-Implementation Process
Proposition 15, District Chapter VI

Please be sure you have completed the preliminary coding on your answer sheet before answering these questions.

Please choose the statement that indicates the work at which you spend MOST of your time. Mark this choice as A on the answer sheet. Leave remaining choices blank.

____ 1. I am a principal/president of a school.
____ 2. I am an assistant administrator of a school.
____ 3. I am a teacher in a school.
____ 4. I am in an ancillary position in a school (guidance counselor, librarian, maintenance, etc.)
____ 5. I am in District, Regional or International service of the Institute.
____ 6. I am on full time study or sabbatical.
____ 7. I am retired.
____ 8. My apostolate is not in a traditional school setting.

9. Please indicate the highest degree earned:

A. Bachelor of Arts
B. Bachelor of Science
C. Masters
D. Masters Plus 30
E. Doctorate

10. Using this list, please indicate each program in which you were a participant.

A. CIL
B. Second Novitiate
C. Sangre (100 days)
D. Mid-years
E. I attended the 1986 convocation in Santa Fe.

The following are items which either traditionally or currently are considered part of our religious life. Please indicate whether you personally think the items listed are: **A.** essential, **B.** desirable, or **C.** optional to the religious life.

ITEM	A ESSENTIAL	B DESIRABLE	C OPTIONAL
11. Holy Mass	___	___	___
12. Communal Meditative Prayer	___	___	___
13. Communal Vocal Prayer	___	___	___
14. Scheduled Spiritual Reading	___	___	___
15. Rosary recited in common	___	___	___
16. Annual District Retreat	___	___	___
17. Wearing of the Religious Habit	___	___	___
18. Attendance at Community Meetings	___	___	___
19. Reddition (Personal Interviews)	___	___	___
20. Meals taken in common	___	___	___
21. Recreation in common	___	___	___
22. Community Annual Program	___	___	___
23. Residing in a religious community	___	___	___
24. Simplicity of life-style	___	___	___
25. Authority of the Director	___	___	___
26. Friendly relationship with the Brothers	___	___	___

Please indicate the degree to which the following items should be included in your religious life. Mark as follows: A. daily, B. frequently, C. occasionally, and D. not at all.

ITEM	A DAILY	B FREQUENTLY	C OCCASIONALLY	D NOT AT ALL
27. Holy Mass	____	____	____	____
28. Communal Mediative Prayer	____	____	____	____
29. Individual Meditative Prayer	____	____	____	____
30. Communal Vocal Prayer	____	____	____	____
31. Spiritual Reading (Private)	____	____	____	____
32. Scheduled Spiritual Reading	____	____	____	____
33. Recitation of Rosary (Private)	____	____	____	____
34. Rosary recited in common	____	____	____	____
35. Wearing of Religious Habit	____	____	____	____
36. Meals taken in common	____	____	____	____
37. Recreation in common	____	____	____	____

Use the following code to answer questions 38-52.
Mark A for yes, B for no.

A	B		
Yes	No	38.	Community living throughout the district should be uniform.
Yes	No	39.	While there are some non-traditional communities in the district, there should be an effort to reduce this number.
Yes	No	40.	I prefer the Community Annual Program as the means for determinimg our community living.
Yes	No	41.	I am content in my present community.
Yes	No	42.	I am knowledgeable about the philosophy of the Initial Formation Program.
Yes	No	43.	Implementation of the Initial Formation Program appears to be consistent with the district's philosophy.
Yes	No	44.	I cope with the reality of the decline in vocations in a Spirit of Faith, trusting in Divine Providence.
Yes	No	45.	Fewer men are attracted to the Brothers' life because of the way that life is currently lived in the district.
Yes	No	46.	The overall decline in the number of brothers is consistent with the decline of religious vocations.
Yes	No	47.	The quality of the aspirants is more important

than their quantity.

Yes No 48. The decline in the number of vocations is a trend that can be reversed.

Yes No 49. Christian Brothers' impact on education is directly related to the number of brothers in a school.

Yes No 50. The impact of Christian Brothers in the school is more a product of the quality of their presence than the number of brothers.

Yes No 51. A common Lasallian educational philosophy is operative in our schools.

Yes No 52. We should actively support brothers who indicate a preference for a non-school apostolate.

In the event of my transfer, I would accept assignment to the schools listed below A. enthusiastically, B. indifferently, C. with difficulty.

SCHOOL	A ENTHUSIASTICALLY	B INDIFFERENTLY	C WITH DIFFICULTY
53. Cathedral-El Paso	---	---	---
54. Cathedral-Carmel	---	---	---
55. Catholic High New Iberia	---	---	---
56. Christian Br. Academy	---	---	---
57. Christian Br. School	---	---	---
58. College of Santa Fe	---	---	---
59. De La Salle	---	---	---
60. Marian-Christian Houston	---	---	---
61. Mullen	---	---	---
62. Notre Dame Shreveport	---	---	---
63. Rummel	---	---	---
64. St. Michael's	---	---	---
65. St. Paul's	---	---	---

Please mark items 66-69. Use A for yes or B for no.

___ 66. I don't want to be assigned to a school.

___ 67. At some time in my apostolic career, I would like to work in the Third World.

___ 68. At some time in my apostolic career, I would like to be involved in direct service to the poor.

___ 69. I do not want to be transferred.

Indicate "Yes" or "No". Use A for yes, B for no.

A B

Yes No 70. I accept the increasing role of the lay-colleague in our schools.
Yes No 71. The role of the lay-colleague in our schools should be defined primarily as that of support non-administrative personnel.
Yes No 72. Lay-colleagues in our schools are a "necessary evil".
Yes No 73. Rather than work under a lay chief administrator, I would ask to be transferred.
Yes No 74. I feel that my work is appreciated by those for whom I work.
Yes No 75. The Christian Brothers' primary apostolate should remain focused on the school.
Yes No 76. I am dissatisfied in my present apostolate.
Yes No 77. Occasionally I experience long periods of discouragement about my work.
Yes No 78. Frequently I think about changing jobs.
Yes No 79. I wish someone would suggest alternate work for me.
Yes No 80. Retirement means that I am not obligated to do any specific work unless I volunteer to do it.
Yes No 81. Unless the school has a policy mandating retirement at a given age, retirement should be voluntary.

Numbers 82-85 are to be answered by RETIRED brothers only.

A B

Yes No 82. I am frustrated in retirement because I feel I can be of some service in the school but have not been asked to help.
Yes No 83. I have found an alternate apostolate for my retirement.
Yes No 84. I wish someone would help me find an alternate apostolate for my retirement.
Yes No 85. I received help to prepare for retirement.

Knowing that the items listed below are all a part of the role of the Brother Visitor, please mark A for the one item to which you believe the incoming Visitor should give the **HIGHEST** priority and E for the one item to which you believe he should devote the **LEAST** amount of time. Leave all other items blank.

___ 86. Religious life of the community
___ 87. Religious life of the individual brother
___ 88. Educational apostolate of the schools
___ 89. Educational apostolate of the individual brother
___ 90. Lasallianization of the lay-colleague in our schools
___ 91. Recruitment and formation
___ 92. Financial conditions district
___ 93. Effective employment